

### Who are the Riau Malay?

The Riau Malay are the largest and most dominant ethnic group in the Riau province of Indonesia. The Riau province includes part of southern Sumatra, the Lingga archipelago and the Riau islands, altogether a huge land-mass of 3,214 islands and covering more than 94,000 sq km.



The Riau Malay have historically assimilated large numbers of nomadic and migrating peoples, including people of Banjar, Minangkabau, Javanese, Mandailing and Bugis ethnicity. Today, there is an estimated 2.2 million

Riau Malay people (including these assimilated groups). Some 1.6 million Riau Malay live on the Sumatra mainland, primarily in settlements along the Indragiri, Kampar and Siak rivers. Another 600,000 live on the Riau islands between Sumatra and Malaysia.

### Languages

There are six dialects of the Riau Malay language. These are used primarily for oral communication. Most Riau Malay are able to speak, read and write Bahasa Indonesia, which is the national trade language used in educational institutions, government, and business.

### Livelihood

The Riau province exhibits many of the features of a “dual” economy. On the one hand there is a high technology, capital-intensive oil sector, and on the other a traditional low technology agricultural sector.

The Riau province contains the most productive oil fields in Indonesia and pumps half the nation’s crude



oil each day. Over 85% of the province’s GDP is generated by petroleum and natural gas production. Pekanbaru, the capital of Riau province, is the administrative center of the regional oil industry.

A majority of rural Riau Malay are farmers and active fishermen. About 62% are farmers growing and harvesting products from rubber, oil palm, fruit, and gambir trees.

Two of the most advanced Riau islands are Batam and Bintan, currently the focus of multi-million dollar investment opportunities. In 1989, the Singapore government proposed the linkage of Singapore, the Riau Islands and Johor (peninsular Malaysia’s southernmost state) in a synergistic “Growth Triangle,” a free-trade economic zone that would benefit all three areas. As Batam and Bintan continue to develop, industrial workers and employees in large tourist resorts are expected to outpace the number of farmers and fishermen. The greatest need at present is meaningful vocational training or work activities for youth, because a vast number of them are unemployed.

### Culture

The Riau Malay people are proud of their historic role in the development of Malay culture. Most see themselves as open, friendly and accepting of newcomers. They feel this has been an important part of their historical tradition, as for centuries they have lived in cordial proximity to Bugis, Makasar, Chinese and Javanese peoples.

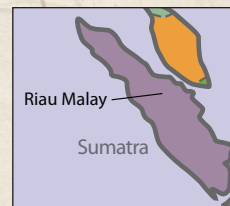
### Beliefs

99.9% of the Riau Malay are Muslim. They have been taught from childhood that Islam is the only true religion for their people.



Very few local churches have any specific focus on reaching out to the Riau Malay. No books about Jesus are available in the Riau Malay language. There are fewer than 60 known followers of Jesus among the 2.2 million Riau Malay people. Most of these few believers have been assimilated into traditional churches. There are currently no indigenous fellowships of followers of Jesus among the Riau Malay.

For more information about the Riau Malay, visit: [www.apeopleloved.com/riau-malay](http://www.apeopleloved.com/riau-malay)



Population: 2.2 million  
 Location: Sumatra, Indonesia  
 Languages: Riau Malay, Bahasa Indonesia

### Prayer Points

**Pray** for indigenous fellowships of Jesus-followers to spring up among the Riau Malay. May a movement sweep through this people group.

**Pray** that God will raise up leaders from among the Riau Malay, who will be key ‘insiders’, bringing the light of Jesus to their own people.



**Pray** for God to reveal himself in dreams and visions.

Almost 20,000 non-Riau followers of Jesus live in this province. **Pray** that local believers would have a vision to reach out to the Riau Malay.

**Pray** for followers of Jesus from other ethnic groups who have moved to the towns of Batam, Bengkalis, Tembilahan, Rengat, Kampar, Pekanbaru, Tanjung Pinang and the surrounding areas, that they will find opportunities to show God’s love to the Riau Malay.

**Pray** that followers of Jesus who serve among the Riau Malay will have wisdom to develop an effective contextualized strategy for sharing Good News.

**Pray** for the literature that has been and will be produced for the Riau Malay. May both readers and writers understand the requirements of Jesus.